



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 959
Vienna, 4 July 2013**

**EU statement on the suspension of the activities of the civil
society organization “GOLOS”**

The European Union has repeatedly expressed its concerns about growing pressure on civil society, restrictive legislation on NGOs and the widespread checks on their activities in the Russian Federation.

In the Astana Declaration, the OSCE participating States recalled the value they attach to “the important role played by civil society and free media in helping us to ensure full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, including free and fair elections, and rule of law”.

In this context, the European Union is very concerned by the recent announcement by the Russian Ministry of Justice that the activities of the civil society organization GOLOS will be suspended until 25 December 2013, on the basis of the “Foreign Agent” law. GOLOS was the first NGO brought to court and subsequently fined, and will now be the first NGO to be closed under this law. These actions call into question Russia’s commitment to freedom of association.

The EU believes that the activities of GOLOS contribute to enhanced electoral transparency and directly support the implementation of international commitments to hold free and fair elections to which Russia has agreed, notably within the Council of Europe and the OSCE, including in regard to the presence of domestic observers.

We note that the Moscow municipal elections are planned for September this year. The closure of GOLOS risks there being no independent election monitoring, and confirms widespread worries inside and outside Russia regarding the implications of the “Foreign Agent” law.

The EU will continue to follow the developments affecting democratic development and Human Rights in Russia closely.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates ALBANIA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.